

English-Language Guide to the Volume

This volume represents the outcome of work undertaken by members of the Turkological Research Group of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences at the Department of Altaic Studies, University of Szeged, as part of the Cultural Heritage of the Turkic Peoples project. Over the years, the research group has focused on the question of the role of religion in the cultures of the Turkic peoples from the sixth to the twentieth centuries. In an effort to resolve various problems that have emerged, we wished to conduct an analysis of contemporary religious texts written in the Turkic languages as our main starting point. At the same time, on the basis of these texts, we have also investigated the way the system of religious concepts used by the Turkic peoples has changed throughout the various periods and how their religious terminology reflects these changes. Participants in the programme are either young scholars with doctorates in Turkology or young doctoral candidates in that field. Current and former members of staff at the Altaic Studies Department have also joined the project. We owe a debt of gratitude to Professor Emeritus András Róna-Tas, a Fellow of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, who assisted us in our work with his valuable comments.

Certainly, the research group could not undertake the task of covering the full range of religions practised by all the Turkic peoples. Thus, in this volume, we only make mention of Nestorianism, with its powerful strongholds in Central Asia, or as it is more widely known, the Church of the East—the sources for which are primarily written in Syriac and thus fall outside the scope of Turkology. For lack of the necessary experts in the group, texts from the Orthodox Christian Turkic peoples were also excluded, such as those of the Gagauzes in Moldova, as were certain of the religious texts of the Chuvash, Yakuts, Dolgans and Kazan Tatars (Krešennye Tatory) in the Russian Federation, and the animist and Buddhist religious concepts covered with a veneer of Orthodoxy among the Turkic peoples of Siberia.

We endeavoured to follow a clear timeline in the volume except in the case of Islam. Our purpose was to use the various sources to provide a direct presentation of the characteristic features of the religions followed by the Turkic peoples—and not to engage in abstract discussions—since it is these texts to which adherents were exposed and these concepts which they used in practising their religion.

In each section, we first provide a brief study with a general overview of a particular religion and the source to be discussed. This is followed by the selected excerpt. In each case, we return to the original text. We have placed the transcription of the Turkic text and the translation side by side. Sections in bold in the Turkic texts indicate that it has been necessary to reconstruct an individual letter or a part of the text. The transcriptions are based on the international transcription system used in Turkology with the exception of the Ottoman Turkish texts, where we based the transcription on the Latin-alphabet edition of the Redhouse Turkish-English dictionary.¹ We have identified the primary sources with codes; the numbers following the codes refer to the line numbers in a particular text. This facilitates searches for religious terms in the glossary within their original context. The name and subject index covers items beyond terminology.

In its current form, the present volume was prepared not only for Turkic Studies scholars or for scholars more generally, but also for a wider audience of readers who wish to learn more about research in philology.



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¹ Sir James Redhouse: *New Redhouse Turkish-English Dictionary*. Istanbul, 1974.